

Child Support Guide

for parents with children in Foster Care



Washington State Department
of Social and Health Services
Division of Child Support

Child Support Guide for Parents with Children in Foster Care

This pamphlet is a cooperative effort between the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Division of Child Support (DCS). The purpose is to answer for parents those questions most often asked when children are in foster care.



When are parents asked to pay child support?

- Whenever the child or the child's custodian receives public funds for the child's care.
- Whenever the child's physical custodian asks for support enforcement services for the child.
- Each time the child enters foster care, whether through voluntary placement by the parent or by court order.

Examples of foster care/residential placement:

- Licensed foster care homes
- Relatives
- Licensed group homes
- An institution if the child needs special care.

Who has to pay child support?

- Mothers
- Fathers
- Stepparents who have lived in the home with the child.
- Adoptive parents
- Persons who have signed affidavits acknowledging paternity.

When does DCS not collect?

- When parents receive adoption support payments from Washington State.
- When the parents of children in alternative residential placement have continuously sought reconciliation and return of the child, and the court has waived support at the placement hearing.
- When the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines there is good cause not to collect.

Why do I have to pay child support?

All parents are responsible for the support of their children. The following federal and state laws require DSHS to collect support for children receiving public funds.

- 42 U.S.C. Section 654 (4)
- RCW 74.20.010
- RCW 74.20A.030

How is the child support amount determined?

Washington uses the Washington State Child Support Schedule (WSCSS) to set support. The Division of Child Support (DCS), the Office of Administrative Hearings and Washington courts all use the same schedule to set or modify temporary and permanent child support amounts.

The WSCSS bases a parent's child support amount on the number and ages of children, and the income and resources of each parent.

- When a court sets an amount . . .
DCS collects the amount the court ordered.
- When the court order does not set a determinable amount . . .

OR

- When there is no court order . . .
DCS determines the amount of support administratively based on the WSCSS.



What if I disagree with the amounts claimed by DCS?

- Begin by calling the Support Enforcement Officer (SEO) assigned to your case.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to contact DCS if you have questions or information.

- If support was set administratively by DCS, you have the right to an administrative hearing.
- If a court has ordered a support amount, DCS enforces that amount. Only the court can change it. You may wish to seek legal advice if you disagree with the amount.
- If you dispute policies and facts about your case, you may request a Conference Board. You may bring a representative to the Conference Board.

Read all notices carefully.

**IF YOU DISAGREE,
ACT QUICKLY.**

***There are deadlines for
Hearing Requests.***

How does DCS collect child support?

DCS must collect the current support amount each month but may negotiate payment on any back support debt you owe. **Most orders require DCS to deduct child support from your wages even if you are current in your child support payments.**

How does DCS enforce child support orders?

DCS enforcement services may include all or some of the following:

- Withholding up to 50% of net income.
- Withholding up to 50% of Unemployment Compensation Benefits.
- Withholding up to 50% of Labor and Industries monthly disability payments.
- Withholding up to 100% of permanent or partial disability payments.
- Attaching bank and other accounts.
- Intercepting federal income tax refunds.
- Filing liens against real and personal property.

- Enrolling children in employer provided health insurance plans.
- Seizing vehicles and other property.
- Referring cases to county prosecutors for contempt proceedings.
- Suspending various state-issued licenses.
- Attaching lottery winnings over \$600.

What if my circumstances have changed since the child support amount was set?

If your child returns home from foster care, and later goes back to foster care, DCS automatically resumes enforcement of any prior support order. A change in your income, resources, or the number of children may be reason to change the amount of support. It is **your responsibility** to advise DCS immediately when any of these changes happen.

- If DCS set the support administratively, DCS or the Office of Administrative Hearings may set a new amount.
- If a court ordered the support, DCS may be able to provide information to help you get a modification of the order.





What if there is government money such as SSI or Social Security for my child's case?

As long as the child is in foster care, the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) applies to receive any benefits for which the child is eligible. DCFS may require you to pay back any government benefits you received directly for a time the child was in foster care.

If you receive disability payments, DCS credits disability dependent benefits toward your child support amount after DCS receives proof of payments that DCFS actually received.

I am required to meet certain conditions before my child can return home. I cannot afford these extra expenses and child support. What can I do?

When the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) notifies DCS of expenses related to family reconciliation, DCS considers these expenses in establishing an initial support amount.

If your income is reduced because of your efforts to comply with a family reconciliation plan, DCS will take this into consideration when setting the support amount.

If you are paying family reconciliation costs and these costs were not considered in your support order, you may request a review of



the support amount. Your expenses related to family reunification may be a reason for reduced child support under the **existing** child support schedule.

If DCS set the child support amount administratively, DCS will apply credit for the expenses against your child support amount. A DCS Claims Officer or an Administrative Law Judge shall consider your court ordered expenses as a reason to deviate from the child support schedule.

If a court set the child support amount, you must ask the court for a deviation and reduction in the support amount. You must explain the reason in writing, and have evidence to support the request.

Read all notices carefully. If you disagree, act quickly. There are deadlines for hearing requests. Contact DCS immediately if you have any questions.

If your child goes into foster care and you have questions about your child support obligation, please contact your private attorney or your local Division of Child Support office.

Persons with Disabilities:

If you need other special assistance (such as a sign language interpreter or an alternate format materials) because of a disability, we can provide help free of charge.

If you would like more information, you may contact the DCS field office for your county. Each office handles one or more counties. The offices and counties are listed below. You may also visit our Internet web site. The Internet address is **http://www.wa.gov/dshs/dcs**

Where is the DCS office nearest to me?

DCS Offices

Everett

Counties served: Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom

Everett Field Office

5415 Evergreen Way

PO Box 4282

Everett, WA 98203-9282

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (425) 438-4800 or (800) 729-7580

Fax: (425) 438-4879

TDD: (425) 438-4939 or 1-800-241-9489

E-mail: everett-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Fife

Counties served: Pierce, Kitsap, and King

Fife Field Office

PO Box 2950

Tacoma, WA 98401-2950

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (253) 922-0454 or (866) 243-4449

Fax: (253) 926-0284

TDD: (866) 270-0832

E-mail: imail_fif@dshsmg1.dshs.wa.gov

Kennewick

*Counties served: Benton, Columbia, Franklin,
and Walla Walla*

Kennewick Field Office

500 N. Morain, #2210

PO Box 5550

Kennewick, WA 99336-0550

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (509) 374-2000 or (800) 345-9981

Fax: (509) 734-7251

TDD: (509) 734-7267

E-mail: kennewick-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Olympia

*Counties served: Clallam, Grays Harbor,
Jefferson, Mason and Thurston*

Olympia Field Office

6135 Martin Way

PO Box 9209

Olympia, WA 98507-9209

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (360) 664-6900 or (800) 345-9964

TDD: (360) 438-8906

Fax: (360) 438-8520

E-mail: olympia-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Seattle

Counties served: King

Seattle Field Office

500 First Avenue South

Seattle, WA 98104-2830

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (206) 341-7000 or (800) 526-8658

Fax: (206) 464-7449

TDD: (206) 464-7851

E-mail: seattle-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Spokane

Counties served: Asotin, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens and Whitman

Spokane Field Office

W. 1608 Boone

PO Box 2560

Spokane, WA 99220-2560

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (509) 363-5000 or (800) 345-9982

Fax: (509) 456-4148

TDD: (509) 363-5080

E-mail: spokane-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Tacoma

Counties served: Kitsap and Pierce

Tacoma Field Office

2121 S. State Street

PO Box 1237

Tacoma, WA 98401-1237

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (253) 597-3700 or (800) 345-9976

Fax: (253) 597-3725

TDD: (253) 593-9976

E-mail: tacoma-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Vancouver

Counties served: Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Lewis, Pacific, Skamania and Wahkiakum

Vancouver Field Office

5411 E. Mill Plain Blvd., Building 3

PO Box 4269

Vancouver, WA 98662-0269

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (360) 696-6100 or (800) 345-9984

Fax: (360) 696-6491

TDD: (360) 690-4633

E-mail: vancouver-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Wenatchee

Counties served: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan

Wenatchee Field Office

Street address:

515 Grant Road,

East Wenatchee, WA 98802

Mailing address:

PO Box 2929

Wenatchee, WA 98807-2929

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (509) 886-6800 or (800) 535-1113

Fax: (509) 886-6212

TDD: (509) 886-6833

E-mail: wenatchee-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Yakima

Counties served: Kittitas and Yakima

Yakima Field Office

1002 North 16th Avenue

PO Box 22510

Yakima, WA 98907

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. - 5:00p.m., Monday - Friday

Telephone: (509) 249-6000 or (800) 441-0859

Fax: (509) 576-3776

TDD: (509) 575-2675

E-mail: yakima-dcs@dshs.wa.gov



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